Le Bulletin/Newsletter

VOL. 9 • NO. 2 • INSTITUT SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR INSTITUTE • 1989

UNIVERSITE CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

Bulletin Committee/Comité de rédaction: Heather Jon Maroney, Barbara Meadowcroft, Joya Sen.
Production Group/Equipe de production: Heather Jon Maroney, Joan McFarland, Ina Rimpau.
Issue Coordinator/Numéro publié sous la direction de: Barbara Meadowcroft.
Word Processing/Traitment de texte: Lilian Ramos, Marlean Martin.
Desktop Publishing/Composition: Kathy Silver, Bob Cadman.

The Bulletin welcomes submissions of announcements, articles and other relevant material of interest. Material can be written in French or in English; manuscripts must be typed and double-spaced and should preferably be sent on diskette using WordStar or WordPerfect as software. Drawings, designs or cartoons must be in black and white. Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope with any material that is to be returned. Manuscripts will be edited for length and style.

Readers are welcome to write letters for publication. Please include your full name, address, and, if possible, your telephone number. We will withhold your name upon request.

Institut Simone de Beauvoir Institute
Secrétaire, Bulletin/Newsletter Secretary
1455, boul. de Maisonneuve ouest
Montréal, Québec H3G 1M8

Le Bulletin encourage la soumission d'articles, d'annonces, ainsi que de tout autre texte qui respecte le fait féminin et/ou féministe. Les textes seront écrits en français ou en anglais et dactylographiés à double interligne. De préference, faites-nous parvenir votre texte enregistré sur disquette à l'aide des logiciels WordStar ou WordPerfect. Les dessins, les bandes dessinées ou les graphiques seront en noir et blanc.

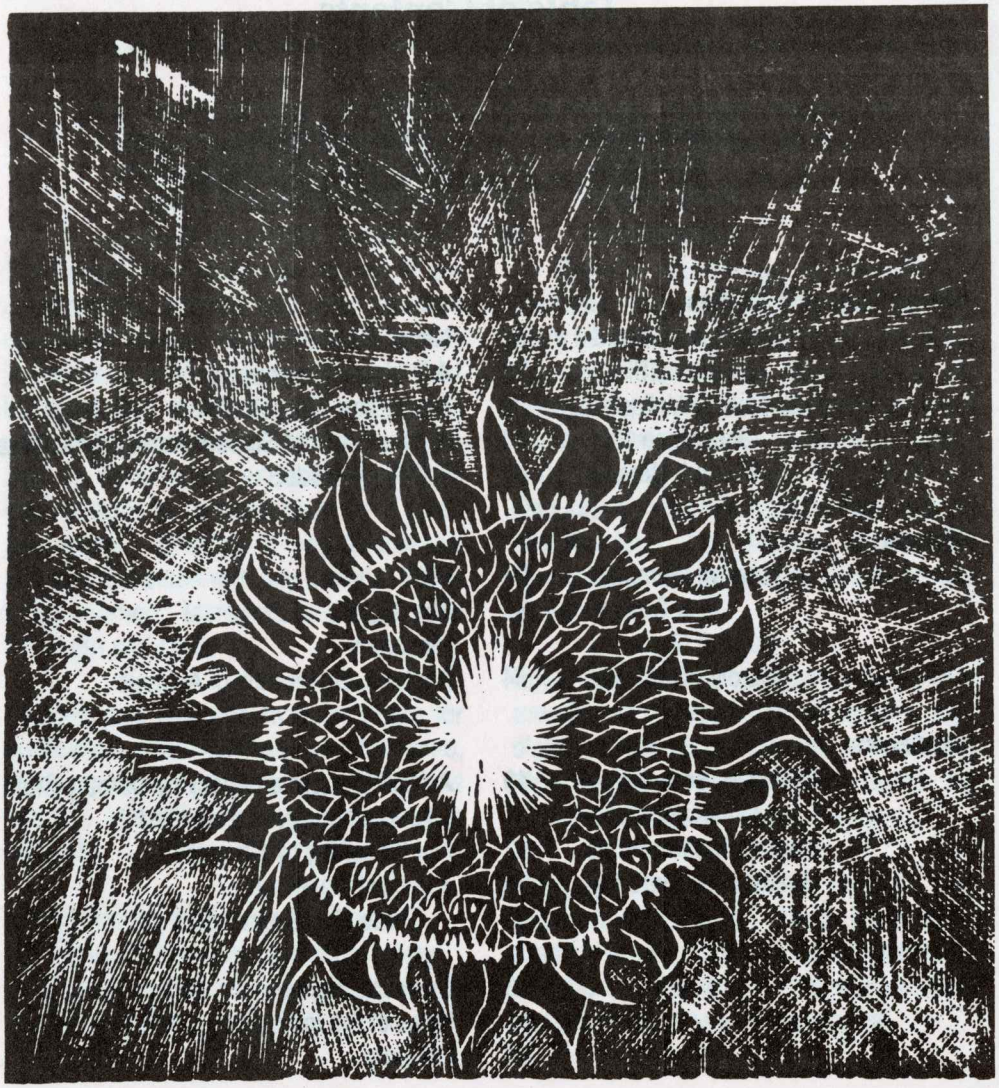
Prière d'ajouter aux manuscrits soumis une enveloppe adressée et affranchie afin d'assurer leur retour. De plus, le comité de rédaction se réserve le droit de réviser les manuscrits et d'en modifier la longeur.

Nous publierons aussi un courrier des lectrices et lecteurs. Toute lettre comprendra le nom, l'adresse, et, si possible, le numéro de téléphone de l'auter/e qui peut demander de conserver l'anonymat.

Annual subscription (two issues per year)/Abonnement annuel (deux numéros par année):
$12.00 Institution/institution 12$
$8.00 Individual/régulier 8$
$5.00 Student/étudiant 5$
Please make your cheque payable to/Faites votre chèque à l'ordre de:
Institut Simone de Beauvoir Institute

Table of Contents

	3	Editorial
Susann Collin	5	La femme grandiose
Ina Rimpau	11	Wild Dykes Don't Get the Blues
Homa Hoodfar	18	Feminist Movement in Egypt
Carla Gruodis	26	Toril Moi on Simone de Beauvoir
Doing Women's Studies:		
Christiane Savard	32	Never "Former"
Kathy Silver	33	A Profound Journey
Susan Shea & Jo Vellacott	36	Where Are They Now?
Josephine Gitu	40	An International Student Arrives in Montreal
Pierre L'Hérault	44	Fellow de l'ISdeB
Poems:		
Carolyn Gammon	24	PMS
Lisa Cowan	39	The Juggler
Carolyn Gammon	42	Dictionary
Carolyn Gammon	54	Aristotle, Generation of Animals
Reviews:		
Janice M. Beaveridge	49	*Ada: A Life and a Legacy* by Dorothy Stein
Lynn Lapostolle	51	*Le cercan* de Jeanne Hyvrard
Barbara Meadowcroft	52	*Not Vanishing* by Chrystos
Heather Jon Maroney	55	Feminist Research: Three New Anthologies
	58	Correspondence
	61	News of the Institute
	63	Obituary
Illustrations:		
Wendy Simon	2	Black Sun
Wendy Simon	43	Two Wooden Suns



BLACK SUN *Wendy Simon*

Last year SdeB reached its tenth anniversary.

As part of the celebration, this issue of the *Bulletin* features work by students. Susan Shea and Jo Vellacott helped trace former students, partly because we thought it might help current students in thinking about what to do next. Christiane Savard, Kathy Silver and Josephine Gitu have shared their experiences as Women's Studies students. And Pierre L'Hérault has reflected on personal and academic influences on his teaching.

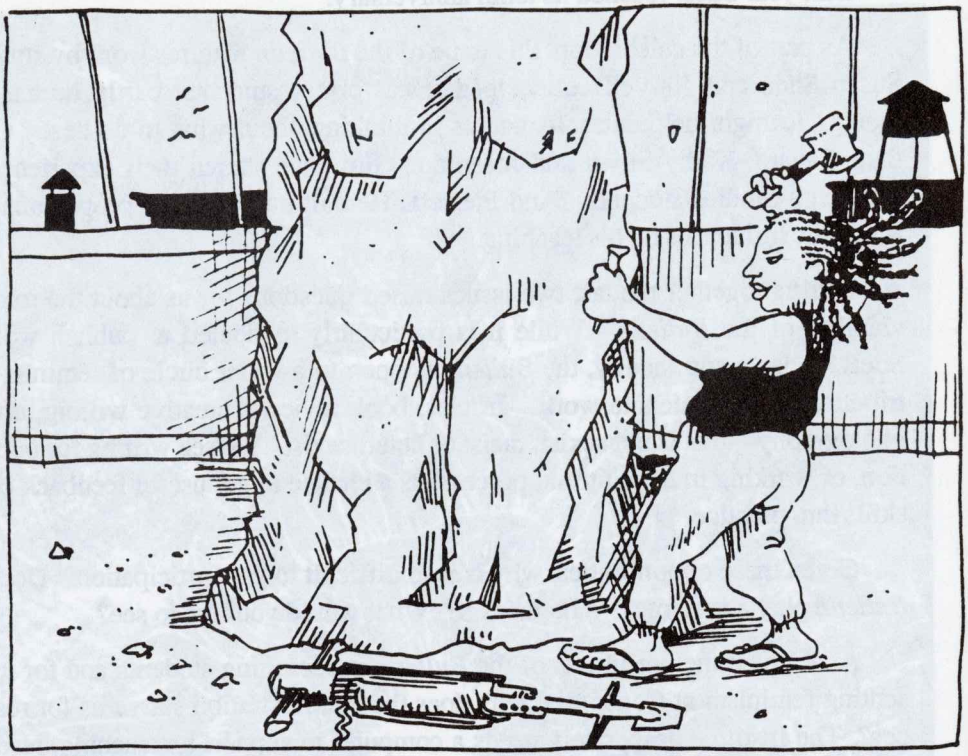
Putting together the last two issues raised questions for us about the role and viability of the *Bulletin.* While it is particularly mandated to publish work of SdeB students and faculty, the *Bulletin* is open to a wider circle of feminist contributions. We welcome work—articles, book reviews, creative writing, art and photography—that is not sexist, racist or heterosexist. We see writing for publication, or working in the editorial process, as a chance to get useful feedback or put skills into practice.

Given these opportunities, why is it so difficult to get participation? Does the *Bulletin* play a real role? Who reads it? What would you like to see?

And, given the usefulness of the *Bulletin* in recruiting students and for representing feminism at Concordia, why does the administration starve us for resources? The Institute desperately needs a computer to support its teaching, research and publishing mandates.

If the *Bulletin* is to be a vital part of intellectual life at SdeB, it needs contributions. If you teach Women's Studies, encourage students to submit work developed from papers. If you are a student, teacher, or staff member, bring us your work.

Thanks to Kathy Silver and Bob Cadman we have a new format. The content is up to you.



J is for Jasmine, who sculpted in stone.

From *Dykes to Watch Out For*

Alison Bechdel, author of *Dykes to Watch Out For* and *More Dykes to Watch Out For*, (Firebrand Press, Ithaca, N. Y.), was in Montreal on January 20 to 21, 1989. She presented a slide show at McGill Women's Union and gave a reading at Androgyny Bookstore.

La Femme Grandiose: Our Right to Shape our Own Bodies

Susann Collin

John Berger (1972) sees a telling difference between the social presence of a man and that of a woman, and what this means for the psyche of each.

> The social presence of a woman is different in kind from that of a man. A man's presence is dependent upon the promise of power that he embodies. . . . A man's presence suggests what he is capable of doing to you or for you.
>
> By contrast a woman's presence expresses her own attitude to herself, and defines what can and cannot be done to her.

He goes on to suggest that as a result of women's history of living within "the keeping of men," women have developed this social presence, but at great cost. "A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself." This is a schizophrenic state, the mirror within. "Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at."

This insight helps to explain a fundamental way in which women find themselves cut off *from* themselves, from their bodies. It helps to explain the cosmetic industry, currently raking in eleven billion dollars a year in America, the diet industry, currently making the same amount of money, and the fashion industry which makes untold billions.

In our society, women are systematically objectified and, as Susie Orbach points out, they participate in this objectification as an adaptive survival mechanism. In her radical book *Fat is a Feminist Issue* (1978), Orbach took a seemingly personal, controllable problem, that of being a big fat slob, and turned it around to demonstrate that this was a way in which women were trying to take control, to reject objectification. It might seem to be a self-destructive solution; nonetheless, it was a solution.

The women whom Orbach treated at the Women's Therapy Centre in London, England, spoke of feeling vulnerable, too small, weak, and unable to do what they needed to do, when they were at a lower weight. They chose to take power by being large. At the same time, because of attitudes towards large women, they were not given power. This is the double bind that large women find themselves in. Women who fit the cultural norm, on the other hand, have power taken away from them by sexual objectification. Women cannot win either way.

Susie Orbach shows great insight into the social forces at work on women and their bodies. There is, however, an underlying message that, once having understood these forces, women no longer *need* to be fat and so can become a "normal" weight. Such a message, as Dickenson (1983) recognizes, is sexist, racist and classist (implying that Orbach's concern is solely with white middle-class women) and, I would add, unrealistic.

The Girdle of Society

But why do women choose to take their anger, frustration, and alienation from themselves out on themselves in this way? Historically, women's arenas have been limited; when one is blocked from action in the public sphere, one is confined to the private sphere. The most intimate expression of that private sphere is the self. If there is no way to control your finances, your place in society, your job, your husband's attitudes or morals, or your children's lifestyles, then you can control yourself. Eating disorders have a great deal to do with control, or at least the perception of control.

Two ways that women have been able to exercise power in the past are through food and beauty. Everything concerning food—planning, shopping, cooking and serving—has been and remains women's work. At the same time, women are expected to embody the masculine ideal of beauty.

The deep schism between these two roles, that of food preparer, mother, nurturer, on the one hand, and that of beauty/sex object, on the other, is nowhere more evident than in the pages of mainstream women's magazines which literally juxtapose articles on food preparation with articles on food withholding/dieting.

Kaplan (1980) says "we learn how to get fat and stay slim all in the same magazine."

Looking at these two factors together reveals how completely women have been restricted to the consumer role. We are sold an image of our selves and then we are sold the means to achieve that image; we are sold a cuisine and then we are sold the technology and the ingredients to make that cuisine. As always, the question must be: who benefits? And the answer is: not us.

Food is more than just a commodity. It is essential to life and has great symbolic meaning. A newborn baby suckles her/his mother's breast instinctively, without thought. Yet according to Kim Chernin (1981), this act, which expresses women's power, shapes the differing ways that men and women relate to food and to their own bodies. Chernin argues that, in separating from their mothers, boys reject the body of the mother, and ever after have an ambiguous relationship towards women's bodies; whereas girls have more difficulty in wholly separating from the mother, and ever after have an ambiguous relationship towards their own bodies.

Eating Disorders

The manifestations of women's double-double-bind are expressed in dieting, compulsive eating, bulimia and anorexia. Dieting *is* an eating disorder but it is so taken for granted in our society that it is estimated that at any one time 50% of women are on a diet. This does not count the number of women who, feeling they should be on a diet, restrain themselves. (Diet Coke is not drunk for its taste!)

In one study conducted in California, 80% of nine-year-old girls were on a diet. In a *Ms.* survey (February 1987), 64.4% of respondents agreed with the statement, "I would like myself better if I were thinner." In a *Glamour* magazine survey of 30,000 women, 95% of them were dissatisfied with their bodies. Chernin calls this hate, not dissatisfaction. She describes how women, when talking about a part of their body they don't like, will pinch it, slap it or squeeze it, trying to will it away—denying their curves and shapes, their very femininity.

Anorexia is a more extreme expression of body obsession. It is a potentially fatal disorder, involving a highly distorted body image and denial of food needs; yet women have been quoted as envying it, as wanting to have "anorexia for a month," as if it were the chicken pox.

Bulimia is a less desirable disorder, being rather more messy, and considerably more secret. Cooper (1987) says "whereas anorexia is a position taken in order to say something loudly and publicly, bulimia is a position taken in order not to have to say something." Bulimia is most often thought of as being a binge and vomit cycle, but the purging behaviour can be dieting, vomiting, using laxatives, fasting, or excessive exercise. The vast majority of women are so accustomed to restraining themselves, to viewing their bodies as something to be manipulated and controlled, as commodity, that all these behaviours are accepted, even desired.

Hostility towards fat in our society is learned at a very early age. Children, asked to rate attractiveness on pictures of children with various physical disabilities (obesity among them!), consistently give the fat child the lowest attractiveness rating. Not only their peers see fat children this way; their teachers and parents do, too.

Many studies and personal stories show the ways in which fat people are penalized. They are frequently rejected for jobs and university places. They have problems finding well designed, affordable clothes and comfortable seating in theatres, airplanes, restaurants, and subways. Being fat is not considered to be a physical characteristic, like being thin, or tall, or short, or having blue eyes, it is considered to be a *moral* characteristic, with negative values.

It is important to understand that this attitude is a learned one, and takes us far away from the pleasure that we had as children, delighting in every nuance of our body movement, throwing ourselves into play, into snow, into water, moving unself-consciously, like fish move through the sea. The loss of innocence is painful, unpalatable, but very real.

Many people, whether fat or not, believe that large people eat more than "normal" people. Numerous studies over the past years have disproved this idea. Large people, on the whole, *eat the same or less* than "normal" people. What

does this say about dieting "success," about self-control and "gluttony"? There is a 95%-99% recidivism rate in weight loss, and 85% of dieters regain *more* than they lost.

Some researchers conclude that when people starve themselves, their bodies tend to redress the balance when starvation (the diet) is over. The concept of a body set-point, a point where the body is healthy and comfortable, whether or not the weight correlates with self image or even society's perception, is gaining ground in weight research. Health, always pulled out when all other "moral" reasons for losing weight have been discredited, has yet to be definitively correlated with weight. Mayer (1983) suggests that the illness traditionally associated with overweight may in fact be related, firstly, to the dieting which most fat people in America have undertaken, and secondly, to the stress that is associated with being fat in a slim society. As Dickenson (1983) says: "Living among people who hate you is enough to make anyone ill."

Garner (1988) believes that dieting *causes* eating disorders, not only psychologically, in that fasting/restraining is automatically followed by bingeing/letting go, but physiologically, because the body compensates by demanding more nourishment after starvation. Continual dieting ruins the body's ability to communicate and appreciate physiological satiety. If girls do start dieting at nine, how can they develop a natural response to physiological needs and to the celebration of nourishment?

Women often feel this obsession with their shape is trivial, personal, and individual, a transformation myth that they alone are living. But this obsession is a metaphor and far from trivial. It links many felt, perceived, conscious and unconscious myths, and realities of a woman's life. Woman as sensual being, woman as mother, woman as nurturer, woman as nature, woman as passionate, woman as growing, woman as powerful. The fear that women perceive in themselves about fat is the fear of taking their place.

Chernin parallels the rise of the women's "reduction" movement with the rise of the women's liberation movement. She compares the words used in liberation: "widening, enlarging, developing and growing" with the words used in reduction: "smaller, shrinking and diminution, confinement and contraction, loss." She ar-

gues that the suppression, or diminution, of women is most likely to occur in an era "when a significant number of women are rediscovering the imagery and meaning of the Amazon."

Finding the centre of our femininity and expressing it in this other-defined society is a task that women must pursue. We must look at ourselves and each other with *our own eyes*, and define the centre within. We must continually ask the question: who benefits?

To cease being both surveyor and surveyed would have profound and far-reaching consequences for women. All that energy freed to go where we choose to direct it. That would really be a revolution.

♀

Sources

Berger, J. 1972. *Ways of Seeing*. London: BBC/Penguin Books.

Chernin, K. 1981. *The Obsession*. New York: Harper & Row.

Cooper, T. 1987. "Anorexia and Bulimia: The political and the personal." In *Fed Up and Hungry*. M. Lawrence, ed. London: The Women's Press.

Dickenson, J. 1983. "Some Thoughts on Fat." In *Shadow on a Tightrope*. L. Schoenfielder and B. Wiser, eds. Iowa City: Aunt Lute Book Co.

Dyrenforth, S., O. W. Wooley, and S. C. Wooley. 1980. "A woman's body in a man's world: A review of findings on body image and weight control." In *A Woman's Conflict*. J. R. Kaplan, ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Garner, D. 1988. "Bulimia: Diagnosis, etiology and treatment." Paper presented at a conference on "Understanding Bulimia," at Concordia University, Montreal.

Kaplan, J. R. 1980. Introduction: "Beauty and the feast." In *A Woman's Conflict*. J. R. Kaplan, ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Mayer, V. 1983. "The fat illusion." In *Shadow on a Tightrope*. L. Schoenfielder and B. Wiser, eds. Iowa City: Aunt Lute Book Co.

Orbach, S. 1978. *Fat is a Feminist Issue*. New York: Berkley Books.

Van Gelder, L. 1987. "Cross-addiction." *Ms.*, February, 1987.

Wild Dykes Don't Get the Blues: Lesbians in Blues Lyrics

Ina Rimpau

The Blues is an art form developed by Black women, translating "everyday" experiences of loss, betrayal, and misfortune into poetry that becomes the Blues. Emotions can destroy us if we are forced to confront them on our own. By expressing emotions and sharing them with an empathic group, their destructive power is diffused. In the words of Blues singer Henry Townsend, trouble makes a good Blues singer (Charters 1963, p. 12).

Women Blues singers deal with issues that are of concern to women: freedom from social and religious constraints, sexual and economic independence. By asserting their right to personal expression, Black female blues singers paved the way for both white and Black female singers in North America.

The ghettoization of Blacks in both the South and the North precipitated the formation of a Black culture, with its own institutions and social clubs. From 1909 to the Depression, the Theatre Owners' Booking Association (TOBA) was instrumental in building an audience for Blues music in the South and in the northeast as its circuits expanded to follow Black migration to industrial centres.

Another acronym for TOBA was Tough on Black Asses (Harrison 1988, p. 23), because of the poor treatment that non-headline acts received. Often booked into towns with no accommodation for Blacks, performers would be forced to sleep in railway stations or warehouses. Nevertheless, compared to domestic service, the type of employment Black women were most likely to get, working in minstrel and vaudeville shows was relatively lucrative; and show business attracted many young women who were eager to break out of the poverty and restriction of their lives.

Amidst the post-World War I social and economic upheavals, gay culture thrived in both Europe and North America in the 1920s. Booming economies and

expanding industries drew more and more people to large cities. Separated from their families, freed from religious and social constraints, gay men and lesbians sought out their own kind and built their own subcultures. In Berlin, no fewer than 100 lesbian bars opened (and went out of business). Marlene Dietrich appeared in a cabaret with a known lesbian singer and sang songs that were, to put it mildly, ambiguous.

According to Cheryl Clarke (1986, p. 206) poor Blacks accepted lesbians and gay men as part of the community:

> I can recall being about twelve years old when I first saw a black lesbian couple. I was walking down the street with my best friend, Kathy. I saw two young women walking together in the opposite direction. One wore a doo-rag, a Banlon button-down, and high-top sneakers. The other woman wore pink brush rollers, spit curls plastered with geech, an Oxford-tailored shirt, a mohair sweater, fitted skirt with a kick pleat, black stockings, and the famous I. Miller flat, sling-back shoe, the most prestigious pair of kicks a Dee Cee black girl could own. I asked Kathy, "Who are they?" "Bulldaggers," she aswered. "What's that?" I asked again. "You know, they go with each other," Kathy responded. "Why?" I continued. "Protection," Kathy said casually. "Protection?" I repeated. "Yeah, at least they won't get pregnant," Kathy explained.

The details about the women's clothes describe a butch/femme lesbian couple. Before the revival of the Women's Movement in the 1970s, it was common in lesbian culture for women to take on either "butch" (masculine-identified) or "femme" (feminine-identified) roles. Although these roles were expressed mainly through clothing, women would also to some extent take on the mannerisms and social behaviour associated with their role. I find it interesting that a twelve-year-old-girl (in the 1950s!) had realistic information on lesbianism, explaining their behaviour in part as a form of self-protection. There seems to be a cynical awareness of heterosexual reality here.

Blues lyrics had a tradition of broad sexual innuendo and of celebration of sexuality. Singers took advantage of this attitude to celebrate non-heterosexual activity. For example, Ma Rainey recorded the "Prove It On Me Blues" in June, 1928:

Went out last night,
Had a great big fight,
Everthing seemed to go all wrong.
I looked up
To my surprise
The gal I'se with was gone.

Why she went
I don't know,
I mean to follow everywhere she goes.
Folks say I'm crooked
I don't know where she took it
I want the whole world to know.

[Chorus] They say I do it
Ain't nobody caught me
You all got to prove it on me.

Went out last night
With a crowd of my friends,
They musta been womens
'Cause I don't like no mens.
It's true I wear a collar and a tie,
Make the wind blow
All the while

[Chorus]

Wear my clothes
Just like a femme
Talk to the gals
Just like any old man.

[Chorus]

The "protagonist" of this song is a self-assured, self-defining lesbian, aware of her notoriety, teasing the heterosexual world that it has to "prove" its suspicions of her. Taking on both butch and femme roles, the singer points out another contradiction that lesbians face in a homophobic society: on the one hand, lesbians are thought of as purely sexual beings; on the other, women's sexuality is only supposed to exist in relation to men.

Ma Rainey was born Gertrude Pridgett in 1886, in Columbus, Georgia. At seventeen she married Will Rainey, a comedy singer, and together they became "Ma" and "Pa" Rainey, "Assassinators of the Blues." She was the first singer to use Blues as part of her repertoire in minstrel acts. Ma Rainey's first big break came in 1923, when she was discovered by Paramount Records. In the five years she was under contract to them, she made ninety-two records, recording with well known bandleaders like Lovie Austin, Tommy Dorsey, and Louis Armstrong.

On the TOBA circuit after 1924, Ma Rainey considerably increased her audience, working bookings in the Northern and Midwestern States. At the height of her fame she had a 25-member show.

Ma Rainey's bisexuality seems to have been accepted, at least in professional jazz and Blues circles. "Ma Rainey's escapades with some of her chorus girls got out of hand at a party after a show in Cincinnati and the police raided the place." (Harrison 1988, p. 33)

Perhaps Bessie Smith's reluctance to acknowledge her professional indebtedness to Ma Rainey stems from their relationship having been not only professional and personal but also sexual; and a volatile relationship at that. Even today, performers who are known by their gay and lesbian fans to be gay themselves are quite happy to keep their straight fans in the dark and make no, or at best only very oblique, references to their sexuality (K.D. Laing is a case in point.)

I contend that groups who are ostracized from "mainstream" society are less apt to be blinded by popular misconceptions or "fads" in psychology, sociology, etc. The Black community *never* bought the Victorian-initiated myth of female passivity and asexuality—witness the many Blues songs in which women speak

openly of their preferences or criticize their lovers' sexual techniques ("One Hour Mama" sung by Ida Cox, "I Need a Little Sugar" sung by Bessie Smith). A well-known singer risked nothing by singing a song in which she appears as a "bulldagger."

"Bulldaggers" is a synonym for lesbians found in Black American literature. As is generally the case with "lower-class" speech, its etymology is uncertain. Judy Grahn (1984, p. 136) traces it back to Boadicea, a Celtic queen who led a revolt against Roman colonisers of Britain in A.D. 61.

Bessie Jackson, also known as Lucille Bogan, recorded "B.D. (Bulldagger) Women" circa 1935:

Comin' hard times
B.D. Women they don't need no men
The way they treat us
Is a low down and dirty sin

B.D. Women
You sure can't understand [repeat]

They got a head like a [unintelligible]
And they walk just like a natural man.

B.D. Women, B.D. Women
They all done laid their claim [repeat]

They can lay their jive
Just like a natural man.

B.D. Women
You know they sure is rough [repeat]

They all drink up penny whiskey
And they sure will strut their stuff.

B.D. Women
You know they work and make their dough [repeat]

And when they get ready to spend it
They know a place where to go.

The singer of this song does not identify as a lesbian and seems to feel a mixture of envy and mystification in regard to lesbians. She is aware of the economic independence many lesbians have, compared to heterosexual women, who often support their men in addition to their own children. Still, she falls into the trap of seeing lesbians as primarily sexual beings, comparing them to men "laying their jive" and "strutting their stuff." She sees lesbians as taking on roles assigned to men and does not question the assignation of these roles.

Memphis Willie B. (Charters 1963, pp. 82-83) sang about

Women loving each other, they don't think about no man.
[repeat]
They ain't playing it secret no more.
These women playing a wide open hand.

I buzzed a girl the other day,
I wanted a little thrill,
She said, "I'm so sorry,
My missus is putting out the same thing you is."

This song seems to indicate that lesbianism was being lived more and more openly, so much so that men were beginning to feel threatened by it.

I believe that it is due to the conservatism of the 1940s and 1950s that there are no recordings of Blues songs with affirmative gay or lesbian content of that era. Art reflects and is formed by the political and social mores of its era, and Blues music is no exception. It wasn't until the 1970s Women's and Gay Liberation Movements that songs with gay or lesbian content were once again mass produced.

Blues as an art form has left its mark on North American music. Black lesbian poets such as Cheryl Clarke and Pat Parker quote and refer to Blues lyrics and singers in their work. Black women singers—like Tracy Chapman and Joan Ar-

matrading and groups like Casselberry-Dupree, Sweet Honey in the Rock, and Four the Moment—carry on the tradition of singing about loving women and describing Black women's lives.

Sources

Bulkin, Elly and Joan Larkin. 1981. *Lesbian Poetry: an Anthology.* Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press.

Charters, Samuel. 1963. *The Poetry of the Blues.* New York: Oak Publications.

Clarke, Cheryl. 1986. *Living as a Lesbian.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books.

Grahn, Judy. 1984. *Another Mother Tongue.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Harrison, Daphne Duval. 1988. *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920's.* New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press.

Jackson, Bessie. "B.D.Women" on *When Women Sang the Blues.* Cerrito, Ca.: Arhoolie Records, 1976.

Parker, Pat. "Movement in Black" in *Lesbian Poetry: an Anthology.* Ed. Elly Bulkin and Joan Larkin. Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1981.

Rainey, Ma. "Prove it on Me Blues" on *AC/DC Blues: Gay Jazz Reissues.* Mattituck, N.Y.: Stash Records, 1977.

Roberts, J.R. *Black Lesbians: An Annotated Bibliography.* Tallahassee, Fla.: The Naiad Press, Inc., 1981.

Smith, Barbara, ed. *Home Girls: a Black Feminist Anthology.* New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983.

A Background to the Feminist Movement in Egypt

Homa Hoodfar

The discussion of feminist movements in the so-called "Third World" often explicitly or implicitly assumes that such movements are not indigenous, but rather merely recent imitations of the West. This mistaken view is then echoed by Third World conservatives with the intention of discrediting local women's movements. In fact, feminism has not been imposed on the Third World by the West, nor is it so new. In many Eastern countries its history dates back to the nineteenth century.[1] Feminism, like other social movements, is engendered by socio-economic changes affecting women. Similarly, the goals and characteristics of women's movements are shaped by their particular socio-cultural contexts. What is particular to such Third World feminist movements is that they are inseparable from anticolonial, national liberation movements.

During the reign of Mohammed Ali (1805-48), Egypt was a forerunner among Eastern countries in attempting to introduce a systematic plan for industrialization and its attendant social restructuring. Modern education was introduced to produce a suitably skilled labour force. In this context, the issue of female education took on a political dimension. Upper class girls had always been educated at home, but the question was whether or not changes in women's roles were essential for "development."

According to the published material that survives, the debate was initiated by male reformers and it was only later that women participated openly. There were two broad opposing views. Conservatives, including many religious leaders from al-Azhar university as well as many secular, western-educated nationalists, argued that women were by nature assigned to tasks of nurturing which were best performed within the domestic domain. They used Islam to justify their position. Conservative nationalists suspected that any change in the education of girls, the mothers of future generations, was intended by the colonial power to destroy Egyptian identity and culture.

Religious and secular nationalist advocates of reform argued that a strong nation cannot deny basic rights to half the population, women. Although not everybody in this camp agreed on the agenda for change, they did agree that education and the improvement of women's intellectual ability was essential. In reply to Islamic conservatives, Kassim Amin (1865-1908) wrote the highly controversial books *Women's Emancipation* and *The New Woman.* He argued in favor of education for all women, condemned polygamy and the divorce laws and supported his claims with quotations from the Koran.

Like most other reformers, he claimed that it was not the true Islam, but rather corrupt practices maintained in the name of Islam, that prevented women's advancement. The reformers viewed the backwardness of Arab women as detrimental to Arab society and sought to rectify it in order to build a strong Arab nation.[2]

Simultaneously with these developments women of the upper classes organized themselves in groups, large and small, to debate issues related to women's position. By 1914, there had already appeared in Arabic fourteen specialized magazines on women's issues, founded and edited by women.[3] The major demands of women were the right to education for all women and the reform of family law. They also started to scrutinize the Islamic origins of the veil. The women's movement remained upper class mainly because these issues were primarily of concern to this class. Ironically, women of the privileged classes were subject to greater restrictions. Poorer women always played an active economic role, particularly in the delta region (Tucker 1985). Polygamy was very rare, since men were not able to support two families or to come up with the *mahr*, which is a sum specified in the marriage contract (in accordance with Islamic law) to be paid to the bride at any time during or at the termination of the marriage. This practically prevented easy divorce for men. The right to education was also irrelevant, since neither men nor women of modest origin could afford the time or the cost. Therefore, poor women had little reason to join the feminist movement at that time.

Women adopted various strategies to overcome the social and familial opposition to their organizing themselves and taking public positions. Since Musilm

women have, by law, full control over their wealth, they were able to found many charitable organizations such as hospitals, schools and training centres where they worked as nurses, school teachers, and managers. In this manner, they created tolerance for these new and unconventional roles. The engagement of upper class women in these jobs boosted the status of women and made it easier for women of other classes to take up such occupations.[4]

Women also joined nationalist parties and participated in anticolonial movements. This initiative afforded them many more sympathizers. And despite their participation in anticolonial movements, they retained their political independence and continued agitating for the improvement of the position of women. Further, they used the charity institutions they had founded as a channel to mobilize women of all classes (al-Sayyid Marsot 1978). In 1919, women boycotted British goods and organized a demonstration in the streets of Cairo against the British. As the London Times reported:

> [the women] descended in large bodies into the street, those of more respectable classes still in veil and shrouded in the loose black coat, whilst the courtesans from the lowest quarters of the city who also caught the contagion (of political unrest) disported themselves unveiled and arrayed themselves in less discreet garments. In every turbulent demonstration women were well to the front . . . shouting for "independence" and "down with the English" and waving national banners (quoted in Philipp 1978, p. 289).

Despite the partial success of the nationalists in winning a new constitution, women gained little. In response, many more women's groups were established. Huda Sharawi, one of the most militant activists, founded the Egyptian Feminist Union in 1923. It became the main association concerned with women's issues but also supported anti-colonial activity.

In 1924, returning from an international feminist meeting in Rome, Huda Sharawi and two other women decided to de-veil and, in a symbolic action, threw their veils in the sea as they arrived at the port of Alexandria. Later they organized a march where upper class women marched unveiled in the streets of Cairo. This

act rejected not just the actual veil but also an ideology which incorporated seclusion. Egypt thus became the first Islamic country to de-veil without state intervention.

The more recent assessment of the de-veiling has dismissed its importance, on the grounds that the veil only affected a limited number of upper class women. But, although women of low income classes never veiled their faces, and wore dresses which did not prevent movement, they nevertheless regarded the upper class veil as an ideal. It was not ideology which prevented them from taking "the veil," rather it was the lack of economic possibilities.

After 1924, feminists continued to agitate for change. By stressing their respect for true Islamic teachings, while rejecting "corrupted traditions" which they claimed were designed to keep women backward, they were able to diffuse much of the opposition to the reforms they sought. In 1942, the feminist activists established the Women's Political Party. In many ways it resembled any other secular, nationalist Egyptian party, except that constitutionally it gave as much weight to women's equality and the revision of family law as to the anticolonial cause. Since many of the existing women's organizations joined the party it became a centre for coordinating feminist activities.

By 1952 women had become such a political force that no party could afford to ignore them. With the winning of independence in 1956, women's full political rights were recognized and a very liberal labour law gave women maternity leave. Education became free and compulsory for all Egyptians, male and female. Family law, however, was only slightly reformed. In 1957, the first time women could vote or stand for office, two women were elected as members of parliament. In 1962, only five years after Ellen Louks Fairclough became the first Canadian woman to hold a federal cabinet position, Hekmat Abu-Zaid was appointed the first female minister of Egypt.

In the period between 1957 and 1970, despite the increasing participation of women in all levels of education and the labour market, the feminist movement declined. It suddenly found itself facing a regime which not only recognized most of its demands, but also actively reinforced them. In the revolutionary atmosphere

of the 1950s, the women's organizations and activists were incorporated into the state and the women's movement lost its momentum.

During the 1970s many elite women used their personal contacts to reform the personal status law governing marriage. This pressure was identified with Jehan Sadat, the president's wife. As a result, a broad spectrum of more enlightened social forces, usually associated with the left wing and anti-establishment politics, did not actively support the reform. In 1985, after the assassination of President Sadat, the newly revived religious political groups successfully pressured the parliament to repeal the reformed law.

Shortly afterwards, feminists scrambled to enter the political arena to ensure that no ground was lost. Ironically, the attempt by Islamic conservatives to impose their limited view of what constitutes women's Islamic rights and what should be their social role has given a new life and impetus to the feminist movement in Egypt. Hundreds of active women's groups, large and small—representing all shades of the political spectrum, from Islamic to socialist and radical feminist—have been born during the last few years. ♀

1 For a summary of feminist movements in selected eastern countries, see Jayawardena 1986.

2 See Abdel-Kader 1988 for a full discussion on the debates.

3 See Philipp 1978, p. 280, for a list and date of these publications.

4 For a more detailed discussion about the strategies women adopted in order to participate in the public and political life of their society, see al-Sayyid Marsot 1978.

Sources and suggested further readings:

Abdel Kader, Soha. 1988. *Egyptian Women in Changing Society 1899-1987.* Boulder: Lynn Rienner Publishers.

Ahmed, Lila. 1982. "Feminism and Feminist Movement in the Middle East." *Women Studies International Forum* 5(2).

———. 1984. "Early Feminist Movements in the Middle East: Turkey and Egypt," in *Muslim Women.* Edited by Freda Hussain. Becenhan: Croom Helm.

Jayawardena, Kumari. 1986. *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World.* London: Zed Press.

Philipp, Thomas. 1978. "Feminisim and Nationalist Politics in Egypt," in *Women in the Muslim World*. Edited by L. Beck and N. Keddie. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

al-Sayyid Marsot, Afaf Lutfi. 1978. "The Revolutionary Gentlewomen in Egypt," in *Women in the Muslim World*. Edited by L. Beck and N. Keddie. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Shara'wi, Huda. 1986. *Harem Years: Memories of an Egyptian Feminist (1874 - 1924)*. Edited and translated by H. Badran. London: Virago.

Sullivan, Earl L. 1986. *Women in Egyptian Public Life*. Cairo: American University Press.

Tucker, Judith E. 1985. *Women in Ninteenth Century Egypt*. London: Cambridge University Press.

From *International Viewpoint*, March, 1989

PMS

Part of half the world's lives
labelled or not, every twenty-eight days

Pre Menstrual Syndrome
not fit for a poem?
the headaches and backaches
bloating and hunger
tears waiting for the right insult

Days of waiting to stain your sheets, your jeans
feeling a flow? no?
days of false alarms
and your breasts get harder and sore
you hold them when you run downstairs
(if no one's looking)

And some women get really aroused
nature's gift—the urge to fuck
yourself, other women, or fuck
with less threat of pregnancy

Those rash actions, slammed doors or phones
broken love affairs, magnified hatred
magnified need
suicides, murders
that can be PMS

so why don't we read more about it?
why isn't it in ballads? the odes?

maybe because it belongs
exclusively
to women

* * *

Ode to Wise Blood

Earliest humanity
believed menstrual blood coagulated into new life
Maoris and Africans thought human souls
were made of menstrual blood
The Greeks called it "supernatural red wine"
and the Celts, "red or royal mead"
One Norse god bathed in a river of menstrual blood
from the giantesses

The Chinese gained immortality by drinking
red yin juice
Egyptian pharaohs diefied their dead
with amulets of our menstrual blood
In Mycenae, the word for "the people"
was "mother blood"
The Bible calls it "blood the flower"
or fruit of the womb
and Adam means "bloody clay"
Some called it
wise blood
moon dew
elixir of immortality

and the Goddess-given menstrual calendar
with thirteen annual lunar months
was established by Chinese women
three thousand years ago[1]

* * *

That's a lot of history
to ignore
every twenty-eight days

Carolyn Gammon

1 See *The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets.*

Toril Moi on Simone de Beauvoir: Feminist Criticism Comes Out of The Wilderness

Carla Gruodis

At the 1929 examinations for the *Agrégation en philosophie*, at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* in Paris, a young woman did so well that she put her examiners in a very awkward position. For at least a moment, they thought about awarding her first place in France's most prestigious competition.

But although they agreed that 21-year-old Simone de Beauvoir embodied the spirit of philosophy, the honour of first place was given to Jean-Paul Sartre. The rest of Beauvoir's legacy is common knowledge: literary, philosophical and autobiographical writings, her role as a major spokesperson for existentialism and various political causes and, of course, the authorship of *The Second Sex* in 1949.

As feminist critic Toril Moi's recent work on Beauvoir suggests, the decision of the *Agrégation* examiners might be seen as the beginning of the end of Beauvoir's career as a recognized, serious philosopher. Moi's project is to look beneath the familiarity surrounding Simone de Beauvoir to discover how, in fact, she was denied "stable status in the French cultural canon." Inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's studies of the culture of distinction around the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, and psychoanalytic theorist Michèle Le Doeuff's work on Beauvoir's "speaking position," Moi's work is moving strongly towards the broadest type of cultural studies. She is interested in Beauvoir "as an intellectual woman. We have to read Simone de Beauvoir in a way that situates her position in the intellectual field, *and* looks at her effect on that field."

The exam results clearly marked Sartre's emergence as "one of the most legitimate heirs to French culture." At the same time, however, as only the ninth woman to pass the *Agrégation*, the young Simone de Beauvoir had to struggle to establish her very legitimacy as a philosopher. In fact, Toril Moi points out, Beauvoir had explicit difficulties casting herself as a philosopher, let alone as one worthy of the standing rightfully hers. Twenty years before writing *The Second*

Sex, Beauvoir never suspected that her femininity might have been an obstacle to her personal and intellectual development, but said: "I have never felt that my femaleness has been the slightest hindrance." As Beauvoir later wrote in the first volume of her autobiography, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, she was so impressed by Sartre's intellectual ability that somehow a three-hour conversation with him was enough to cause her to doubt that she was thinking at all.

In reflecting upon Beauvoir's experience, Moi is developing a theory of the complex operation of reason in male-female relationships, particularly between such cerebral characters as Beauvoir and Sartre. Moi's approach thereby differs from traditional attempts to "explain" Beauvoir, which can easily result in her dismissal by feminists today precisely because of her problematic emotional and theoretical relationship to Sartre. According to Moi, it is the juxtaposition of the erotic and the intellectual in Beauvoir's desire to *love* Sartre that explains why she had to endow him with intellectual (read phallic) power, and why such a seemingly independent woman could not even imagine desiring a man who did not appear to be her superior. Moi continues: "in male hands logic is often violent—there is something in the way it is used that is akin to the defloration of young girls."

By looking closely at Beauvoir's relationship to the supposedly all-powerful "Father" of existentialism, Moi is not simply reproducing the cliché that Beauvoir was ultimately only Sartre's disciple. The "rational" violence Moi is referring to is that of a cultural and psychological pressure so powerful that it could lead an astute woman like Beauvoir to consciously desire only a superior male partner, and as a result to construct her own intellectual inferiority. According to Moi, then, Beauvoir's rejection of a career in philosophy in favour of literature, and the hostile reception of her work and personality by the popular press, can only be understood in the context of a culture deeply prejudiced against the intellectual woman.

In 1989, sixty years after Beauvoir sat the famous exam that branded her "second only to Sartre," and thirty years after the publication of *The Second Sex*, Toril Moi may be confronting many of the same issues, but she is obviously doing so from a radically *different* speaking position. Equipped with the "educational capital" that was much harder to come by in France in the 1920s and with over twenty years of feminist theorizing and activism to reflect on, Moi is undoubtedly

in a better position to evaluate Beauvoir with the necessary critical rigour and flexibility. The specificity of Moi's own situation and ideas might, therefore, say as much about the present situation of feminism and feminists as her study of Beauvoir reveals about French culture before the emergence of the *Mouvement pour la libération des femmes* in the late 1960s.

When Toril Moi talks about Simone de Beauvoir it is not just as a critic but as a woman of comparable intellectual and political commitment. It is the force of Moi's insistence on the contradictory legitimacy and precariousness of her own position that makes the meeting of these two minds so interesting. For if Beauvoir shied away from the philosophical career she was clearly so well-suited for, Toril Moi has undertaken to unravel the complex system of ideology and sexism in French intellectual culture to explain why.

Moi's own experience of feminism dates to the early stages of the women's movement in the 1970s in Norway, when she "went to all sorts of meetings like everyone did." After finishing a Ph.D. in comparative literature in Bergen, Moi moved to Oxford, where she again became heavily involved in feminist discussions. In a recent interview, Moi stressed that these discussions always concerned the practical implications of feminist theory. In recent years, her work regularly takes her away from her home in Oxford to teach at Duke University and to Norway, where she is Director of the Centre for Feminist Research at the University of Bergen and teaches for several weeks each year.

Moi's first book, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985), is perhaps the most thorough review of feminist literary theory available and has virtually become a primer for any studies in feminist criticism. If the book might be criticized for taking too much of a text-book approach to theory, Moi's unflagging concern with the practical implications of cultural theory—in the best tradition of British marxist feminism—provides a solid political underpinning to her analysis of British, American, and French feminist theory since the 1960s. Through a multiple optic of marxist, poststructuralist, and psychoanalytic theory, Moi describes the work of women (from Kate Millett to Julia Kristeva), evaluating them on the basis of their concern for material conditions and their awareness of the cultural/ideological

construction of all notions of authorship and femininity. Moi's book challenges us to remember that literary theory is not so much about books as about people.

Most of her work to date has been "meta-critical," i.e. concerned with the logical construction of theoretical questions. Moi, who approaches issues of language and gender through the writings of other thinkers, and has not produced her own original theory, argues that there is no such thing. Always primarily interested in the political usefulness of cultural criticism, Moi prefers to think of herself as a *reader* as much as a theorist. With characteristic pragmatism, she stresses that it is useful and necessary to reexamine the work that has already been done. As the editor of *French Feminist Thought* (1987) and *The Kristeva Reader* (1986), Moi is just as insistent about the strategic importance of political positions, especially in a traditional institution such as the academy, during a period of increasing conservatism. "I think it is important to call oneself a socialist feminist, if only to bother the people who don't like it."

Moi's study of Beauvoir begins to fill the void of scholarly and other writing about the woman who is popularly considered the founder of contemporary feminist theory. For example, Moi points out that only 40 entire books have ever been written about Beauvoir, with the majority of serious studies coming from England and North America. The dearth of Beauvoir studies is particularly shocking in France, where it is unfashionable (and therefore intellectually dangerous) to do serious work or dissertations on the author of *The Second Sex*. Just as Beauvoir wrote that book because she realized that in order to write about herself she would first have to deal with the question of woman's difference and subjugation, Moi begins her book with an examination of Beauvoir's paradoxically unstable position in the French philosophical and cultural canon. Like Beauvoir's extensive (800-page) study of woman, Moi's work will be comprehensive—three volumes dealing with everything from Beauvoir's historical context and literary works to her philosophical and autobiographical writings.

In a paper presented at the SdeB Institute on International Women's Day, Moi argued that "The Reception of Simone de Beauvoir " can only be explained with reference to the snobbery and chauvinism surrounding philosophical discourse and especially the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*. Thus, while Beauvoir was con-

sidered by the *Agrégation* examiners to *exemplify* philosophy, the freedom to theorize was not readily given to women and the topos of the asexual, priggish and over-achieving schoolgirl followed Beauvoir throughout her life.

"In the French context the explicit references to the school situation has a series of quite specific implications. This is not simply a dismissal of women's generally pathetic efforts to appear as learned as men are. What clearly irks Beauvoir's critics, and particularly the French ones, is the fact that she is an intellectual women whose formal training and qualifications—the *agrégé de philosophie* and so on—more often than not outshine their own."

Even as late as 1961, Moi continues, the up-and-coming cultural theorist, René Girard, in a review of Beauvoir's *The Prime of Life*, felt perfectly justified in attacking her as "one of those little female prodigies who win all the prizes in school and get the 'mention très bien,' thus poisoning the lives of their more relaxed brothers."

By looking at critical texts about Beauvoir, ranging from the popular to the academic, Moi is able to identify the epistemologies and ideologies underlying Beauvoir's reception as well as popular cultural attitudes towards intellectual women. And by drawing systemic connections between socio-economic conditions, institutional ideologies, cultural representations and theoretical analysis, Moi shows how the irony, characteristic of most of the attacks on Beauvoir, is a specific form of "male distancing rhetoric," which is based on the assumption that true insight belongs to the male commentator. In Beauvoir's case the ultimate irony was to attack an intellectual woman as "really" ignorant, and to undermine "her right to intervene in discourse as a subject of 'enunciation,' " the right to speak that has been traditionally denied women by patriarchal ideology. Thus Moi concludes, "We have to *posit* her right to speak before we can evaluate her ideas."

Having done so, however, Moi is careful not to attempt to arrive at a cohesive, and therefore reductive, reading of Beauvoir's thought. Just as the dominant culture and ideology that refused Simone de Beauvoir were necessarily riddled with contradictions, her own thought cannot be pinned down to any single school or label.

"I would have liked her to be a psychoanalytic marxist feminist or something, because that's what I think I am, so it would have been nice if she were too. But we have to ask what kinds of marxist discourses were around in 1949—mostly very economistic ones, and that would have been a disaster for the book." In view of the lack of marxist or psychoanalytic theories that might have served her purposes, Beauvoir had to draw on a "patchwork of all sorts of discourses" in writing *The Second Sex.* From Moi's perspective, however, it is precisely in the theoretical flexibility of Beauvoir's approach (conscious or not) and the complexity of its author's shifting speaking positions that the power and value of the book lies. Many critics struggling with Beauvoir have given up and concluded that *The Second Sex* is merely a Sartrian disciple text and therefore permanently tainted by the sexism and/or binarism of existentialist philosophy. Moi, on the other hand, insists that *The Second Sex* is both the culmination and subversion of Beauvoir's dependence on Sartre. Ultimately, Moi identifies the addition of a "crypto-materialism" onto Sartre's ontology that explains the materialist consciousness that is so clearly present in all of Beauvoir's writing, that rescues it from the potential apoliticism of existentialism, and that makes it an emancipatory text.

Not surprisingly, Moi applies the same clear and pragmatic perspective to her own work. Although she believes that literary criticism is definitely not at "the vanguard of the revolution, " she is firm about the importance of politicizing her field. As a part-time professor at the currently trendy Duke University, Moi recognizes that the increasing complexity of academic feminist discourse "on one level isolates it from what there might be of a women's movement." Referring to her own role, Moi says: "I see myself as making local interventions in one kind of discourse . . . and I wouldn't want to play into the hands of the anti-intellectuals that hold it is nothing, [because] any revolutionary movement needs a theory." At a time of general political conservatism and reactionary anti-feminist backlash, Toril Moi is very realistic about the important role of feminists in the universities.

"This is at least one place where feminist ideas are not only discussed but kept safe. We have the problem that every time there's been a surge in feminism, twenty years later there's a backlash. To that extent, academic feminism, in times of political conservatism like now, at least has that function—of protecting the feminist heritage from total obliteration by the Mrs. Thatchers." ♀

Doing Women's Studies

Never "Former"

Christiane Savard

Although I have been out of the Women's Studies programme for more than three years and have lost touch with a lot of the close friends I made at the Institute, I don't want to be called a "former" Women's Studies student. When someone does, I always protest vehemently. "Former" sounds so final, as if my connection to the Institute were a thing of the past. I respond by saying: "TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) is only a hobby. As soon as I finish my Bachelor of Education, I'll go back." Or I say: "Sometimes I think I picked TESL because the TESL centre is located on Bishop Street, the closest faculty to the Simone de Beauvoir Institute."

Oh! I did learn to live without the SdeB, mind you, but did I miss it! When I graduate this summer, the temptation to go back and finish my Women's Studies degree will be strong. And although the prospect of working and earning money may win out in the end (after five years of hard university labour, who can blame me!), one thing is sure: until I finish my Women's Studies degree, until every single person I have ever known at the Institute is gone, and until the very building that houses the Institute is torn down, I'll never be a "former" Women's Studies student. Women's Studies and the Institute will always be a *current* part of me.

♀

Women's Studies: A Profound Journey

Kathy Silver

What do you mean, where am I now? You mean I'm supposed to have gone somewhere? I'm right here, as always, with the documentalists chasing me for keeping books out of the Reading Room too long. I'm still worming my way into any parties and special events I find out about in time, asking to be put on mailing lists, and trying to keep up on the latest news at the Institute. I did my degree on a part-time basis, so I was around here from 1981 to 1987, which is a good part of the life of the Institute. And now, when the SdeB has been a large part of my life for all these years, you mean I'm supposed to *leave*—just because I graduated?

Why was I here for so long? Partly, because I got off to a slow and tortuous start: the first two years I was laid low with serious back problems. I had to take three runs at WMNS 291; I thought I'd *never* complete it. Every time I started it, I wound up in hospital with a disc operation. My transcript says DISC. It's supposed to stand for "Discontinued" but I always think of it as "Disc Operation!"

And partly because I spun it out as long as I could. I was here for the educational journey, not for the destination. It was a profound journey—perhaps because it spanned a number of years—far more profound that I had ever anticipated. It irreversibly changed the way I view myself as a woman, and the way I analyze societal structures and the very nature of the construction of knowledge.

What ever possessed me to start a Women's Studies degree program at the age of 47, after having raised a family in tandem with working as a freelance journalist and broadcaster? I'd taken lots of courses over the years—I'm a course junkie—but there wasn't any degree program in "malestream" academia that I felt like committing myself to wholeheartedly. I'd always found traditional scholarship to be slightly "off centre." Whether it was history, English, religion or psychology, it seemed somehow skewed and didn't match my own perceptions and reality. Also, it had to be something pretty compelling to induce me to give

up writing scripts (for money) for the dubious privilege of writing essays (for marks)!

Without knowing it, I'd waited all my life for an academic programme that gives *women* centre stage. In Women's Studies we are the *subjects*, not the objects being studied. We are at the centre, reclaiming knowledge about women that has been lost or ignored, making new knowledge and questioning traditional knowledge. It is intellectually challenging to question knowledge that has been taken for granted for millennia. Maybe we don't have the answers, or maybe we have contradictory and conflicting answers that we can't reconcile, but we sure have all the important and exciting *questions*.

I found Women's Studies to be a world of passion, idealism, activism, confrontation, rhetoric, exhilaration, despair and burnout. A world of extremes, in other words. Classes were sometimes highly charged emotionally, as students and professors became embroiled in working out their own positions and defending them against all others. We were constantly confronting our own socialisation and world views. We all had to make our own compromises and accommodations in trying to balance the headiness of feminist rhetoric with the nitty-gritty of our everyday lives in the often painful process of working out our feminist *praxis*. It was never dull!

School was never out: every newspaper item, TV program and relationship came under our critical eye as we scrutinized it from our new (and ever-changing!) perspectives. While other women were having their "colours done" we sat around the WSSA office agonizing over the links between sexism, classism, militarism and racism. And some people think Women's Studies is "fluffy"!

Now I've moved out of the hothouse world of Women's Studies into the cooler world of the Education Department. I'm right around the corner in the Hall Building doing a Master of Arts degree in Educational Studies with a concentration in Adult Ed. This is an interdisciplinary program in educational research and theory, and I am trying to mould it to fit my agenda, which is to examine education and gender issues at the graduate level. Moving into a traditional, non-feminist department was a big adjustment for me, and I have been labelled the

"gender police" by other students (in fun?) because of my promotion of non-sexist texts and language in the classroom. I'm nonplussed to see how little the "outside world" has responded to the plethora of feminist research and our years of agitation for social change.

Soon I must come to grips with my thesis. It will be about women and education: how we relate to knowledge and learning, what kind of education permits us to flourish, how we can influence the construction of knowledge. I'm basing it on the theories developed in *Women's Ways of Knowing* (by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, Basic Books, 1986), a powerful book about women's educational and moral development. No, no, please don't ask me what my thesis "question" is—my main question is: will I ever finish it?

It's easy for me to talk about what I got out of Women's Studies but harder to talk about what I want to give back. My goal is to use my knowledge and skills to help other women, and I'm always looking for ways to do this. For example, I prepared the report on a three-day workshop on Women and Development that was co-sponsored by the SdeB and INSTRAW (a United Nations teaching and research agency). Also, I've organized and facilitated workshops for women on assertiveness training and communications skills, because I think we women still have a lot of problems with self-esteem and standing up for ourselves effectively. I hope to do more workshops in the future, but right now, I'm trying to master the mysteries of Desktop Publishing. I want to use these skills (and the horrendously expensive equipment) to help women's groups to put out professional looking material.

By next Christmas I should have finished my degree. Then what? Well, I expect I'll still be hanging around the SdeB, because I need nourishment from my feminist roots. However, I think by that time I'll have amassed a lot of knowledge that I would like to put to use to empower other women, but so far I haven't figured out how or where. Any ideas?

♀

Former Women's Studies Students: Where Are They Now?

Melissa Caplan is completing an M.A. in English at Queen's and should be finished by June. She is working as co-ordinator of Volunteers Programs for the Elizabeth Fry Society of Kingston. She is also involved in two other social service agencies dealing with sexual assault and child sexual abuse.

Leah Carlin graduated from Concordia in December, 1988, having completed a Bachelor of Business Administration with a minor in Women's Studies. She is presently a research and teaching assistant in Concordia's Management Department, and has a part-time job. She intends to get into the MBA programme at Concordia in September.

Linda Cormier travaille présentement à la transcription de 11 cassettes d'entrevues. Les entrevues ont été réalisées dans le cadre de maîtrise sur la socialisation des femmes en milieu ouvrier montréalais entre 1900 et 1950. L'analyse de ces entretiens constituera le chapitre final de sa thése.

Jeanne Corrigal came to visit Montreal in January. She is very active in the women's community in Saskatoon where she is living. She told us that she is returning to Montreal in September, 1989, in order to complete her B.A. in Women's Studies.

Stella Gaon is an editorial consultant and research associate to the Canadian Federation of Deans of Management and Administrative Studies while completing her M.A. in Women's Studies/Literature/Philosophy. She is sorely missing a community of radical feminists.

Trish Hall completed her B.A. in Women's Studies in December, 1988. She has returned to Hamilton, Ontario, where she is living with her sister and working at the Hamilton Art Gallery.

Kathryn Harvey is completing her M.A. at the Université de Montréal in History. The title of the thesis is "To Love, Honour and Obey: Wife Battering in

Working Class Montréal, 1869-79." She is doing research in the Judicial Archives and is also working at the Chateau Dufresne Museum of Decorative Arts.

Kathrine Hill graduated in December with a B.A. in English Literature and a minor in Women's Studies. She will live in Montreal until the summer, when she will move to Ottawa to begin an M.A. in Social Work at Carleton University.

Margaret Kamester is having a great time working as Jo Vellacott's Research Assistant during the writing of Jo's book on British suffragist and pacifist, Catherine E. Marshall. She also continues to work as the English cataloguer at the Lachine Municipal Library. Any time left over goes to music, the Westmount Initiative for Peace, and Scottish dancing.

Louise Karch completed her certificate in Women's Studies in June, 1988, and is now a Residence Programme Coordinator at the University of Western Ontario. She is also doing volunteer work on sexual assault. Louise was joined in London by Monica McQueen, whom she met at the Institute; they plan to live happily ever after.

Catherine Kellogg is working on a research contract for Food Share Metro Toronto where she is producing an annotated bibliography about food policy. She is also training at the Toronto Center for Psychodrama and Sociometry to become a licensed Psychodramatist. She continues her love affair with radio, and is taking a course in radio documentary production at Ryerson. Catherine is trying to figure out how to worm her way into the Women's Press.

Victorya Monkman is doing counselling and consulting work with adult women survivors of sexual violence and has two workshops scheduled for the spring/early fall on women's personal development. She recently had an article published in RFR about her experiences working for the Federal Government. She is living peacefully in the country getting in touch with the rhythms of the seasons.

Karin Montin is a writer and translator, who is also teaching translation at McGill and somehow managing to read a few good books and see a few good friends at the same time.

Cleo Protz has two children and lives on the South Shore. She is busy co-ordinating the setting up of cooperative housing units.

Reggie Russell is graduating in Law from UQAM and is hoping to go on to further study in this area. Her main interest is in Social Welfare policy in Canada.

Susan Shea is completing an M.A. in Women's Studies/Religion/Philosophy and should be finished by the summer, at which time job search panic should have fully set in. She is presently working with Jo Vellacott and Margaret Kamester on the fabulous Catherine Marshall book. For the past year she has done volunteer work with people living with AIDS. The long distance relationship with her lover in Toronto continues to make life interesting.

Mary Taylor is presently at the tail end of an M.A. in Religion. She says academia is really stupid. She is happily book-binding with her partner, and plans to leave this "urban blight" for green pastures somewhere in Quebec.

Denise Tremblay has completed her B.F.A. in film animation. She is working for graphic designers and doing animation on the side.

Hélène Tremblay graduated in June, 1989, with a B.A. in Women's Studies and received the Maïr Verthuy Award for high academic achievement. She is completing a contract with Hydro-Quebec and planning a book on society and feminism. She has three children.

Janet Wiegand completed a Bachelor of Social Work last spring at McGill. She is presently trying to develop a career in community organizing/social work. She is living in Montreal with Leah Carlin and Rebecca Cowan.

Susan Shea, Jo Vellacott and others

The Juggler

I met him in a smoke
Filled bar he spoke of
Many things concepts
Ideas nothings he
Juggled various names
Terms and definitions
As though they
Were something in
His life he

Juggled them round and
Round back and
Forth names like Freud
Sartre Chekhov

And Freud

As though he really knew
Them was being personal he
Juggled his ice-cube in
His glass as tidal waters
Juggle and mold Nature's
Stone using obvious
Terms of profundity like
Nihilism Utilitarianism
Existentialism he

Juggled them with the
Combination of the drinks
The music people's
Voices that he

Juggled with his own his
Hands his stare Reaganomics
Welfare State Bureaucracy
Capitalism Socio-economic
Shoelaces he

Juggled his balls.

Lisa Cowan

A Cold Welcome:
An International Student Arrives in Montreal

Josephine Gitu

Kenya has only four universities. The total number of those who qualify for entrance to university exceeds the places available. For this reason, many students study abroad and then return home. Therefore, I am no exception as one Kenyan who chose to study abroad rather than wait one and a half years before attending university.

I had a wide variety of universities to choose from. I applied to, and was accepted by, universities in West Germany, the United States, Britain, India and Canada. There were many things to consider: for example, the expenses and type of education. To this day, it remains a mystery why I finally settled for Canada; the stories I heard from returned students about life in different countries certainly influenced me.

After a debate within myself about what to do, I decided to come to Canada. Before I left home in September 1987, I prepared myself for hard work at school. I did not prepare myself for problems like loneliness and isolation, not to mention culture shock. I found the welcome very cold and alienating.

It was relatively easy to cross physical barriers compared to the mindsets that I had to confront and attempt to understand as I interacted with Canadian students. These students expected me to appreciate their concerns and fit into the community immediately. I remember one student asking me whether I was from the jungle and my reply was yes.

The misconceptions that Canadian students had of the third world shocked me. The questions were endless: Do you have banks in Africa? Do people put on clothes? Do you have schools under trees? How many times did you go to bed hungry and did you see a doctor about malnutrition? I was made to feel I was from the bush. The enthusiasm I had before leaving home was shattered.

I really wanted to go home where I had left my family and friends—loved ones who understood me without questions about who I was.

Brought up in a family where ties were strong, I found it extremely difficult to understand the individualistic lifestyle in Canada. For example, I was used to the idea that a neighbour was a friend, whereas here it is the opposite. You are lucky if you know your neighbour. I went through great pain in my daily struggles, especially with school which was a totally different system to the one I was used to. It made me ask myself whether I had chosen the wrong place to study.

I was depressed. It required an effort of will power simply to sleep. And when I did sleep, getting up in the morning to come to school was difficult. Those who met me saw nothing wrong with me; it was an inner feeling of emptiness and lack of real pleasure. I continued to smile, pretending to the world that everything was alright. When alone, the facade crumbled and I would break down and cry.

Coming from a developing country, I wanted to learn about things that would help my people. With this in mind, I enquired about other departments where I could enrol and be useful to my people, especially women. The triple burden of women caught my attention—they were expected to care for the family and work as labourers; to grow food for the family and for the market. How could I be of help? As I went through the university calendar, I came across the Simone de Beauvoir Institute which offers courses on women. I felt that I had found the right place.

In January, 1988, I joined the Institute. My main interest was in developing a theoretical understanding of the problems faced by women today, especially women in the third world. Barbara Roberts, visiting professor at the Institute, was very helpful and understanding. Her genuine smile and readiness to listen made me feel welcome. For the first time since I arrived in Canada, I had someone with whom to share my experiences and fears. When classes began, I encountered an initial hostility from some students but it died quickly. Life began to have a meaning, and my school work began to get better.

At the Institute I met people with a very different perception of humanity; my loneliness was slowly eased by the friends I met. I found a spirit of togetherness which is lacking in other departments.

No one is immune to depression. The Simone de Beauvoir Institute should have orientation programmes to welcome new students. Many women students at Concordia feel alienated and depressed. They lack proper information about where to turn. The best that the Institute can do is provide care.

After I discovered the Institute, I was able to settle down. My school work improved and so did my mental state. The sisterhood and understanding that I find at the Institute keep my spirits high.

♀

Dictionary

Random House
defines
penis:

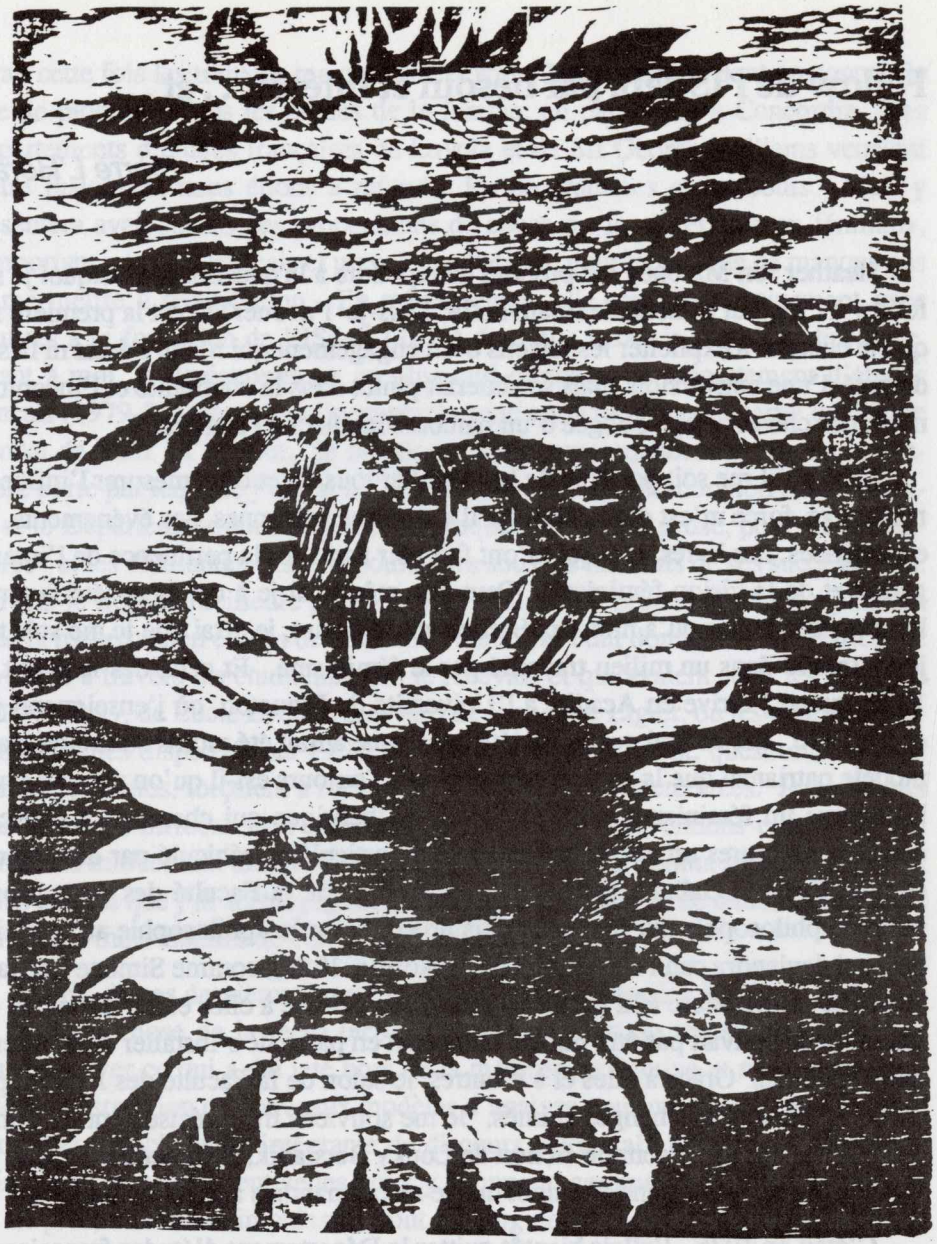
the male organ of urination and copulation

Random House
defines
clitoris:

the erectile organ of the vulva
homologous to the penis of the male

Random House
defines
not so randomly at all

Carolyn Gammon



TWO WOODEN SUNS *Wendy Simon*

Fellow de l'ISdeB: par besoin et intérêt . . . et . . .

Pierre L'Hérault

Heather Jon Maroney me propose de répondre à la question: «Pourquoi je suis fellow à l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir?» Dois-je l'avouer? C'est la première fois que je cherche à expliciter les raisons d'un engagement qui n'a ni l'éclat ni la soudaineté d'une conversion, mais se situerait plutôt dans la continuité et l'incontournable des choses, étape obligée d'un parcours intellectuel et affectif.

Sans qu'il me soit possible de les détailler tous ici et d'en mesurer l'influence respective, force m'est d'admettre qu'il y a eu des personnes, des événements, des expériences, des livres, etc. qui m'ont fait voir assez tôt la pertinence de l'interrogation et de la vision féministes. Peut-être même, ai-je à cet égard été favorisé. Pour ne m'en tenir qu'à mon expérience universitaire, je dirai que je me suis toujours trouvé dans un milieu travaillé par le féminisme. Et cela, dès le début, en 1972, quand j'arrive en Acadie, à l'Université de Moncton, où j'enseignerai jusqu'en 1976. Est-ce vrai que la société acadienne aurait été moins contrainte par le modèle patriarcal que la société québécoise? Toujours est-il qu'on pouvait y voir à l'oeuvre un féminisme aussi pratique que théorique qui cherchait à s'inscrire dans les structures universitaires et sociales, articulé et véhiculé par des femmes comme Corinne Gallant, première vice-doyenne de la Faculté des Arts, professeure de philosophie qui proposait déjà un cours sur la «philosophie au féminin», titre qui deviendra celui d'un livre (Ed. d'Acadie, 1984), comme Simone LeBlanc-Rainville, professeure à la Faculté d'éducation. Grâce à elles et à d'autres, le «au féminin» ne pouvait pas être oublié, mais était en passe de s'installer dans la sensibilité générale. Grâce à elles et à d'autres, le salon de la Faculté des Arts fut plus d'une fois le lieu d'échanges animés. Je me souviens très précisément de l'un de ceux-ci portant sur la somme-fiction de Louky Bersianik, *L'Euguélionne*, que j'avais lue avec le plus grand plaisir et que je recommandais à tout le monde.

C'était en 1976. J'allais bientôt quitter le Département d'études françaises de l'Université de Moncton pour celui de Concordia. L'incontournable féminisme

aurait cette fois les traits de ma collègue et amie, Maïr Verthuy dont on connaît le rôle de pionnière dans les études de la femme, en particulier à Concordia. Les Départements d'études françaises de Loyola et de Sir George Williams venaient d'être fusionnés; nous étions à refondre les programmes et les cours. Maïr y présentera avec succès des propositions de cours sur la «littérature au féminin», comportant un volet français et un volet québécois, pour lequel elle ne manqua pas de me mettre à contribution. En même temps, elle travaillait activement avec d'autres à la fondation de l'ISdeB (1978) dont elle serait la première directrice. Quant à moi, je deviendrais un an plus tard directeur de Département d'études français (1979-85), poste que j'occuperais pendant la plus grande partie du double mandat de Maïr à l'Institut. Je mentionne cette concordance, car elle fut la première porte par laquelle j'entrai à l'ISdeB. Une étroite collaboration entre l'Institut et le Département nous apparut réciproquement avantageuse, pour les professeures* et les étudiantes. Elle se poursuivra sous les mandats de ses successeures. Pouvais-je trouver meilleure position pour évaluer les besoins de l'enseignement et de la recherche en études de la femme, dont il m'était donné de voir l'efficacité novatrice à travers les étudiantes que je recevais et qui avaient suivi les cours de Maïr Verthuy, de Lucie Lequin, plus tard de Françoise Ligier, ou les cours de Women's Studies dispensés par l'ISdeB. Ces étudiantes lisaient, questionnaient autrement les textes, forçaient à réviser les interprétations accréditées. Je ne saurais sous-estimer l'influence sur mon enseignement des interventions et travaux des étudiantes initiées aux théories féministes, celles que j'ai connues dans mes cours, celles surtout que j'ai accompagnées, à titre de conseiller ou de témoin, dans leurs recherches individuelles de 1er, 2e ou 3e cycle.

Auprès de ces dernières j'aurai appris entre autres que les études de la femme ont quelque chose de la *terra incognita*: elles exigent un travail archéologique pour retrouver ce qui a été jeté hors de la mémoire collective et nécessitent souvent la construction de nouveaux modèles d'analyse pour remplacer ceux qui font autorité et (donc!) partie intégrante du discours patriarcal. D'où leur difficulté et l'insécurité où se trouvent celles qui s'y adonnent, comme j'ai pu le voir et le vivre de près, en témoin impuissant, tout au long des recherches de maîtrise de ma compagne Juliette Laplante sur le théâtre de femmes au Québec. Bien sûr elles sont condamnées à l'excellence. . .pour le meilleur et pour le pire! C'est-à-dire à

toujours refaire la preuve du bien-fondé et du sérieux de ces recherches. Comme si, depuis *Le deuxième sexe*, la preuve n'avait pas été faite à plusieurs reprises de l'énorme capacité du discours féministe à critiquer, renouveler, révolutionner même le discours social et la société elle-même, et vice versa.

Si en effet, comme universitaire, je m'intéresse au féminisme, c'est justement qu'il m'apparaît incontournable (j'insiste!) dans une démarche intellectuelle. Je le dirai autrement et plus platement: si, comme universitaire, je m'intéresse au féminisme, ce n'est pas par générosité à l'endroit de l'autre moitié (et un peu plus) du monde, mais par la même honnêteté intellectuelle qui fait que je cherche à connaître les théories critiques les plus récentes. . .Par besoin donc, par intérêt! Dans le domaine québécois, qui est le mien, il faudrait vraiment faire exprès pour ignorer le rôle stratégique tenu par le pensée et les pratiques féministes dans l'évolution de la société, de ses institutions, de sa culture, etc. Tout n'a pas encore été dit là-dessus, mais un livre comme *L'histoire des femmes au Québec* (1982) l'établit hors de tout doute. *Egalité et indépendance* (1978) aura été beaucoup plus que le titre d'un mémoire du Conseil du statut de la femme; par sa formulation même, il aura fort astucieusement tracé une ligne en deçà de laquelle on ne pourrait plus revenir sans se renier.

On ne saurait par exemple, rendre compte du développement de la littérature et du théâtre, mes deux domaines actuels d'enseignement, sans conjuguer *modernité* et *féminisme*, comme l'ont reconnu une douzaine d'auteures et d'auteurs et de critiques parmi les plus en vue (*La presse*, 9 janvier 1988, p.J-1). Textes de fiction et textes théoriques de femmes jalonnent et ponctuent les récentes pratiques de l'écriture québécoise. A l'ironique bible déjà citée de Louky Bersianik, *L'Euguélionne* (1976), qui refait le monde à partir de la femme, j'ajoute la très rapide et incomplète nomenclature suivante: Nicole Brossard, pour ses textes de fiction et de théorie, pour la *Barre du jour* et la *Nouvelle barre du jour*; Madeleine Gagnon, pour ses entreprises d'archéologie; Francine Noël, pour *Maryse* (1983) et *Myriam première* (1987), mais peut-être encore plus pour son irremplaçable article sur le théâtre: «Plaidoyer pour mon image» (1980); Louisette Dussault, pour *Moman* (1981), mais plus encore peut-être pour «L'itinéraire pour une moman» qui la précède et l'explique en décrivant le cheminement d'une comédienne et d'une au-

teure; *Nous parlerons comme on écrit* (1982), de France Théoret, peut-être le roman le plus exigeant dans sa précision mathématique et musicale; *La Québécoite* (1983), de Régine Robin, dont le titre à lui seul indique qu'il s'agit d'un des romans les plus pertinents des années 1980; les collages de Simone Monet-Chartrand, *Ma vie comme rivière*, qui retracent de façon très concrète la vie et l'action d'une femme pour qui le privé a toujours été politique; des essais comme celui de Suzanne Lamy, *D'elles* (1979), ou celui de Madeleine Ouellette-Michalska, *L'échappée des discours de l'oeil* (1981) . . . Sans oublier, bien sûr les best-sellers (d'Arlette Cousture, de Francine Noël, de Francine Ouellet) qui racontent à un très vaste public un monde revisité ou inventé par le regard féministe. Sans oublier non plus de relire des écrivaines qui, comme Anne Hébert, depuis longtemps, sans toujours en avoir l'air, proposent des récits où tout s'unifie dans la conscience et la vision d'une femme pas du tout consentante, ou comme Gabrielle Roy au sujet de laquelle on commence à voir que sa condition de femme n'a pas été étrangère au rôle déterminant de *Bonheur d'occasion*, et de remonter plus loin, jusqu'à Laure Conan, dont le personnage d'Angéline de Montbrun est autre chose que la projection d'une «vieille fille» laide, frustrée et incestueuse! Aussi lacunaire soit-elle, cette liste montre que, dans mon métier, la théorie féministe est un recours nécessaire. Cela je viens de le trouver confirmé par Patricia Smart dans son tout récent essai littéraire: *Ecrire dans la maison du père* (1988).

Rien de surprenant donc à ce que je me retrouve à un moment donné plus formellement, comme fellow, affilié à l'ISdeB, mieux en mesure à la fois de profiter de ses ressources et de travailler concrètement à faire qu'il soit de plus en plus ce lieu où à travers une approche nécessairement interdisciplinaire, il est possible de soumettre le savoir humain et ses expressions à la lecture féministe dans des conditions optimales, celles qu'on s'attend à trouver dans une institution vouée à la recherche. Au Comité des études supérieures et de la recherche, avec, en même temps ou successivement, Bina Freiwald, Maïr Verthuy, Arpi Hamalian, Elizabeth Henrik, j'ai cherché et cherche, d'une part à définir les meilleures conditions, formes et structures favorisant les études de 2e cycle en études de la femme et, d'autre part, à encourager chez les professeures la recherche. Si sur le premier point, diverses propositions sont toujours à l'étude, qui pourraient cependant

bientôt passer au stade de la réalisation, deux initiatives concrètes ont déjà été prises, en vue d'atteindre le deuxième objectif.

D'abord la mise sur pied d'un séminaire de recherche destiné aux fellows, aux adjunct fellows, aux professeures, aux chargées de cours et aux étudiantes de 2e et 3e cycles de l'ISdeB. Il en est à sa deuxième édition. En 1987-88, il avait pour thème: *Immigrant Women/Les femmes immigrantes*; en 1988-89, il a pour titre: *Mothering-Motherhood/Maternité-Maternage*. Dans le prolongement de cette initiative, nous avons ensuite créé les *Publications of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute/Publications de l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir* qui publient ou réimpriment les travaux des membres professeures et étudiantes de l'ISdeB. Les trois premiers numéros ont été lancés à l'occasion du 10e anniversaire de l'Institut. D'autres sont en chantier, notamment les publications des actes des séminaires de 1987-88 et 1988-89.

C'est donc comme coordonnateur de ces deux initiatives (séminaire de recherches et publications de l'Institut) que s'est concrètement traduit mon intérêt (dans les deux sens) pour l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir et les études de la femme.

Intérêt d'abord justifié, ai-je dit, par des raisons d'ordre intellectuel bien sûr(!), mais . . . il y a aussi que Juliette et moi avons deux filles pour qui je suis la première figure du mâle. Il faut bien que ce mâle soit le plus présentable possible. . . .

*Pour ne pas, comme on dit, alourdir le texte, le féminin ici contient souvent le masculin.

♀

Dorothy Stein, *Ada: A Life and a Legacy.* MIT Press, 1985.

This biography reveals the life and work of an unusual kind of scientist. Distinguished from other women of the early nineteenth century by her interest in mathematics, she was a mysterious and romantic figure, whose life was indirectly influenced by the famous father she never knew, the poet, Lord Byron.

Augusta Ada Byron, later Countess of Lovelace (1815-1852), finds a place in the history of scientific and technological development for her work with Charles Babbage, creator of the Analytical Engine, which would become the foreunner of the modern computer. Ada has been credited with producing "a sophisticated and polished computer program—the first in the world."

Author Dorothy Stein, a psychologist and computer programmer, uses original Lovelace family papers and other primary sources to illustrate family influences and the social context within which Ada grew up, married and conducted her work. Challenging contradictory evaluations of Ada's work and mathematical abilities, Stein explains why Ada did not achieve the fame she longed for and concludes with an acknowledgement of Ada's hard work and "questing spirit."

Ada showed early promise of great accomplishment. Through correspondence with private tutors and independent reading, Ada studied mathematics in relation to astronomy and molecular biology; she made observations concerning climate and temperature relating to plant growth; she took an interest in electrical and magnetic fields and even in such diverse subjects as phrenology and mesmerism.

Ada considered herself to be a brilliant mathematician, analytical, even a genius; at the same time she viewed herself as poetic, philosophical, and imaginative. Believing in her intuitive capacities to discover hidden realities, she combined the mathematical with the metaphysical, the scientific with the spiritual. Stein writes: "Ada's Notes frequently moved to a level yet more rarefied and detached from the physical embodiment of a machine, to expatiate on the metaphysical implications and latent powers of an entire mental industry. Here she seemed to be in her element" (p.92).

The area of Ada's work best documented and most complete is her Notes on the Analytical Engine. Her association with Babbage began in 1843, when she translated an article by Captain Luigi Menabrea about the Analytical Engine. Upon Babbage's suggestion, Ada embarked on a project to write her own Notes which, (in Babbage's words), together with Menabrea's memoir, furnished "a complete demonstration—that the whole of the developments and operations of analysis are now capable of being executed by machinery." Steins adds: "For Ada—and for Babbage—the calculating machine was a metaphor as well as a harbinger of economic and scientific progress" (p.93).

The social barriers to Ada's pursuits are suggested by her wish to keep her studies anonymous and by her inability to approach publishers directly with her Menabrea translation. She was unable to participate in the male networks associated with educational institutions and societies. She could not, for example, gain access to the Royal Society library.

Nevertheless, gender did not prevent Ada from conducting what she considered serious scientific work. She possessed the economic advantages of the privileged class, receiving instruction from such notable individuals as Charles Wheatstone, Woronzow Greig, Lambert Quetelet, John Crosse and Michael Faraday. Although she had three children, domestic help lightened the burden that married women generally had to bear.

Her work was often sporadic, however, and interrupted by continuing episodes of illness, both mental (what she described as manias, derangements and hysteria) and physical (at times causing much pain). Living in a world that assumed the constitutional weakness of women, she accepted the view that "too much mathematics" contributed to her illness. She shifted her interests to an equally passionate study of music in full expectation of a distinguished career playing the harp. This did not materialize.

There is no doubt that Ada stands out as an original, independent woman. It is interesting to note that she insisted that her work be recognized as her own: that she was not an "organ" of Babbage.

The strength of this biography is in its well developed description of Ada Byron's work and life in the social context of England in the 1830s and 1840s. Ada's contribution to science cannot be described as discovery or as invention, but as the creation of a vision. Would Babbage's mechanical devices have been developed as they were without her Notes? Would this century's computer revolution have come later, or been different, without her early flights of imagination?

The biography attempts to attribute appropriate credit to a woman scientist who formerly was credited with either too little or too much.

Janice M. Beaveridge

Jeanne Hyvrard, *Le cercan.* Paris, Des femmes, 1987.

J'aimerais bien vous glisser quelques mots sur le plus récent livre de l'écrivaine française Jeanne Hyvrard. Pas pour vous le décrire en long et en large. Non. Vous dire seulement qu'il s'agit d'un livre non conventionnel sur le non-dit et le non-entendu. Ajouter qu'elle aborde dans la première partie, Des mots pour ne pas le dire, la question de la terminologie, proposant de nouvelles formes propres à faire évoluer les mentalités. Vous glisser qu'elle aborde ensuite la question des réactions de la société sous forme de dialogues, et que ça a pour titre Des voix pour le vivre, qui traite de la parole *carnée* et permet à l'auteure et aux *cancérigéné-e-s en lutte* (c'est moi qui féminise) qui ont collaboré à ce livre, de faire des rapprochements des plus intéressants entre cancer et folie, cancer et langage, cancer et manque, cancer et fusion, cancer et logique, cancer et métaphysique et, enfin, cancer et littérature. Puis des témoignages se recoupent dans Des vies pour souffrir; des réflexions dures et d'autre empreintes de «gros bon sens»—comme ce «Il est clair qu'une femme qui fabrique un cancer au sein ou à l'utérus a quelque chose à dire sur la condition de la femme.»—trouvent leur place dans la partie suivante, Une médecine pour guérir. J'ajouterai aussi que la dernière partie, Bulletin de sortie, comprend un dialogue mère-fille qui revient sur la question du *cancer du féminin.* Je vous soulignerai que les voix/voies sont mul-

tiples: textes, dialogues, choeurs . . . et que cela n'en donne que plus de valeur et de chaleur au livre.

Jeanne Hyvrard parle de fusion, de passion, de langage (il est bien dommage d'ailleurs qu'elle féminise quelques termes selon une logique certaine mais pas la langue dans laquelle elle écrit!), de femmes, de la folie, du chagrin, de la maternité, elle invente *la cancère* . . . Je vous dirai enfin que ce livre se lit aussi bien à la lumière de la lampe de chevet qu'à celle du soleil du matin. Je vous dirai pour terminer que ce livre est très beau.

Lynn Lapostolle

Chrystos, *Not Vanishing*. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1988.

Chrystos writes as a Native American, a woman and a Lesbian. That does not mean that only those who identify with her on all points need to listen. On the contrary, her poems—which depict indifference, intolerance and injustice—speak to us all.

Chrystos asks uncomfortable questions. Who are we trying to protect when we deny an old Native woman the right to sleep on the floor of a government building? Is it her safety or our comfort we are protecting? She points to the shallowness of white liberals who write papers on racism, but can't even see a Black woman.

> All those workshops on racism won't help you open your eyes & see
> how you don't even see us
> How can we come to your meetings if we are invisible
> (p. 13).

In "I am Not Your Princess," Chrystos warns us not to project our fantasies on to Native Americans.

> See my simple cracked hands which have washed the same things
> you wash See my eyes dark with fear in a house by myself
> late at night See that to pity me or to adore me
> are the same (p. 67).

The seventy-two pieces that make up this collection are mostly written in free verse, with a scattering of prose/poems. The rhythms are those of everyday, spoken English. Even when the rhythm becomes more patterned, as in the short lyric, "O Honeysuckle Woman," we still hear the voice of an individual woman.

And what a wonderful range of voices Chrystos gives us: the bitterness of the abused woman in "Bitter Teeth"; the cheeky rebellion of the charwoman in "You Can't Get Good Help These Daze"; the erotic joy of the lover in "Double Phoenix"; and, in "Crooning," the sadness of the Lesbian who recognizes that her family will never let her come home "with her woman lover in her arms" (p. 76).

Some of the voices bubble with humour; others are self-critical. The narrator in "I was over on the Rez" is angry with an old Native man for being drunk in front of white people, and simultaneously critical of her own reaction: "he's the stereotype I've fought all my life often as cruelly judgmental as any white person" (p. 79).

Chrystos has the ability to create striking images out of tired clichés. Describing a female psychiatrist greeting her patient, Chrystos says:

> "Her door opened she leaned with a smile Come On In
> Blue birds of happiness wheeled in her teeth (p. 9).

In "I walk in the History of My People," the poet uses an extended metaphor to describe the sufferings of her people.

> You can see through the pins in my bones
> that we are prisoners of a long war
> My knee is so badly wounded no one will look at it
> The pus of the past oozes from every pore (p.7).

Chrystos's poetry bears witness to what life is like for many Native women in North America: the child abuse, the prostitution, the alcoholism, the drug abuse, the degradation of doing jobs that no white person will do. But, she insists, Native Americans are *Not Vanishing*. They survive in our cities; suffer in our institutions; march in our demonstrations. Why is it we can't see them?

Chrystos is a forty-year old Native American, who was born in San Francisco and presently lives in Bainbridge Island, Washington. Her work has appeared in various journals and in the collections *This Bridge Called My Back* and *A Gathering of Spirit*. *Not Vanishing*, Chrystos's first book, is illustrated with her own drawings and beautifully printed by Press Gang Publishers of Vancouver, a feminist collective.

Barbara Meadowcroft

Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 733a 26-30—Adaptation

the male is
as it were
a deformed female

and the semen
is menstrual discharge
though in an impure condition:

i.e.
it lacks one constituent
and one only,

the principle of
blood

Carolyn Gammon

Yoland Cohen, ed. *Women and Counter-Power.* Black Rose Books 1989.

Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn, eds. *Feminism: From Pressure to Politics.* Black Rose Books 1989.

Peta Tancred-Sheriff, ed. *Feminist Research: Prospect and Retrospect/Recherche féministe: bilan et perspectives d'avenir.* McGill/Queen's University Press for CRIAW/ICREF 1989.

The appearance of three collections of feminist social science in the early months of 1989 in itself would seem to mark a new stage in Canadian feminist publishing. Although not all of the work is new, with Cohen's volume translated from French and Miles and Finn a revised edition, they give an overview of some of the concerns of feminist work and a sense of its academic institutionalisation.

In her introduction to the 1986 Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women/*Institut canadien de recherche sur les femmes* conference, Marguerite Andersen placed feminism at a crossroads. Intellectually, the last twenty years have brought real gains in research, contacts and institutional placement for feminists in academia; yet politically, a "serious backlash" means that the women's movement as a whole cannot take its gains for granted. The articles dealing with reproduction and maternity substantiate this view most clearly. Margrit Eichler argues that pregnancy and birth are undergoing processes of medicalisation and judicialisation, while other contributors show how *doctors'* definitions of normal birth both provide the categories into which women organise their experience, and establish the grounds for high levels of medical intervention, which in turn generates feelings of failure for women who undergo such procedures. Diverse political conclusions are drawn with most contributors confirming earlier warnings, while Martin Thomas sanguinely suggests that low levels of gender preference and willingness to pre-select children (at least among middle class, educated, protestant North Americans) are unlikely to lead to gender imbalances at higher age levels.

Articles on education explore issues of difference, including "feminist pedagogie," a useful update of research on mathematics training, research and

achievement. Contrasting perspectives suggest that women have a distinct learning style, but that as apparently unlikely a group of men as medium security prison inmates have benefitted from a Women's Studies course.

Other wide-ranging contributions discuss Antonine Maillet's older women, reconsider the *Doll's House* as a continuing inspiration for evolving feminist agendas, reflect on the ambiguities of state and personal power and political strategies of groups ranging from REAL Women to the Feminist Party of Canada, or bring us up to date on issues of depression, and coping strategies of abused or alcoholic women. Four studies of women's work not only bring to light women's work in Moncton in the 1890s, in St. John's 1890-1921, in relation to a development project in the Yucatan, and among fishermen's wives in Acadia today, but through their precision and regional focus demonstrate the strengths of historical and developmental perspective.

Despite the range and unlike previous CRIAW papers, which paramountly valued inclusion, Peta Tancred-Sheriff has selected papers in English (15) and French (8) which provide a good picture of the diversity of feminist research and action.

For Angela Miles, the addition of six new articles to the earlier *Feminism in Canada* marks a transition from integrative to transformative feminism. These new articles do introduce a diversification of perspectives. Lyrics from the *a cappella* group, Four the Moment, explore the experience of being Black and a woman in Nova Scotia. Nicole Brossard explores woman-centred Language. Anne Cameron criticises academic feminists for elitist use of "Manguage," while academics turn their critical tools on patricentric, fragmentary methodologies in law and sociology. Finally, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Women and Development looks at international development aid projects to provide a feminist programme for Canadian non-governmental organisations.

The third volume, *Women and Counter-power*, makes available in English presentations on women in political life given at *Université du Québec à Montréal*

in 1985, continuing an important task undertaken in, for example, the Women's Press translation of History of Women in Quebec and in Michèle Barrett and Roberta Hamilton's *Politics of Diversity.* Several articles, which trace the ways women operated in conjunctures of high levels of political mobilisation in Poland, Spain, Argentina, Portugal and Algeria, introduce the complexities of feminist struggles in different national and cultural conditions. A second focus is on "periods of chill," where women's efforts go to establishing organisations that represent their views within conditions of patriarchal and class repression (Italy after World War I and rural Quebec in the first half of the twentieth century). Alternately, women seek influence by lobbying tactics (Ottawa) or by trying to change the agendas of international politics from militarism to feminism.

A third section explores strategies, from a consideration of the state to pacifism, and from a conference on Strategies for Power, which brought activists to Ottawa from Europe and North America, to those suitable for the year 2000. The essays were selected with an emphasis on women's voice, Cohen insists, to contribute to feminist and not merely gender studies. While somewhat uneven, the focus, not on the political under-representation of women but on their diversity, *practice* and perspectives, makes for fascinating reading.

If we were to read back from these volumes to Canadian feminist work, we would get a picture of a range of empirically grounded, localised studies, that are part of the process of an emergent feminist body of work and that are based not only in data but in practice.

Heather Jon Maroney

Correspondence

The following exchange was prompted by Jeanne Maranda's *Après La Foire* in the last issue. We include a letter from the Lesbian Studies Coalition and replies from Jeanne Maranda and the *Bulletin* Committee.

Lesbian Studies Coalition
of Concordia
1455 boul. de Maisonneuve o.
Montreal, QC. H3G 1M8
December 13, 1988

Le Bulletin/Newsletter
Institut Simone de Beauvoir Institute
1455 boul. de Maisonneuve o.
Montreal, QC. H3G 1M8

To the Editorial Collective and Issue Coordinator:

For your latest newsletter you solicited an article from the Lesbian Studies Coalition of Concordia. As a coalition we have a policy of not submitting material to publications that print racist, sexist or homophobic material. We assumed the Simone de Beauvoir Newsletter to be such a publication.

Obscuring Lesbian History - A Case Study, written by one of our members, appeared in Volume 9, No. 1. In the same volume you published an article by Jeanne Maranda, entitled *Après la Foire*, in which she describes her experiences at the Third International Feminist Book Fair held in Montreal last June. She writes:

55 pays étaient representés par 275 maisons d'édition, à trop forte concentration de lesbiennes américaines, je soulignerais.

We are dismayed that the Simone de Beauvoir Newsletter would allow such a blatantly homophobic statement to be printed.

If Jeanne Maranda had complained of the "trop forte concentration" of women of color, would you have printed that complaint? We think not. More and more feminists are becoming sensitized to issues of racism, but it seems as if anti-lesbianism is the last bastion of bigotry.

As lesbians and as feminists we do not feel we should have to justify our existence to non-lesbians. We regard feminist events and institutions as places where we can be open about our personal and political commitments without endangering ourselves.

Jeanne Maranda seems to be saying that lesbians should be silenced; that the charade that the feminist movement is a movement by and for heterosexual feminists be maintained.

The Simone de Beauvoir Newsletter should *not* be a forum for any type of discrimination. The Concordia student newspaper, *The Link*, edits submissions for racist, sexist and homophobic content. The editorial collective of the Simone de Beauvoir Newsletter obviously does not implement such guidelines. The Lesbian Studies Coalition of Concordia will not submit further material until you do.

If you do not have any members on your editorial collective who are sensitive to issues such as homophobia and heterosexism, we are willing to give you our input.

We hope that you will print this letter, along with a response, in your next publication.

Ina Rimpau
for the Lesbian Studies Coalition of Concordia

cc: Elizabeth Henrik,
Acting Principal of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute

Montréal, le 24 janvier 1989

Le Bulletin/Newsletter
Institut Simone de Beauvoir
Montréal QC

Et voici que l'adverbe «trop» soulève l'animosité entre les femmes! Je regrette que Ina Rimpau m'ait prêté un sentiment qui était bien loin de mon propos.

«Trop» ne faisait que rendre compte d'une concentration d'homosexuelles plus élevée que la moyenne à l'intérieur de la 3e Foire internationale du livre de Montréal.

«Trop» voulait dire aussi qu'il y avait moins de place pour les hétérosexuelles, qui pourtant sont en majorité chez les féministes.

«Trop» n'a rien à voir avec mon désir de réclamer le «silence des lesbiennes,» elles qui sont en ce moment, presque les seules dépositaires de la parole féministe engagée, et que j'admire pour cela.

Je déplore toutefois qu'il s'en trouve encore qui insistent pour diviser notre maigre pouvoir qui lui, ne sera jamais «trop.»

P.S. Si j'avais écrit «pas assez d'hétérosexuelles» comment auriez-vous réagi, Ina?

Jeanne Maranda

The *Bulletin* deeply regrets that, due to the pressures on its production staff, a slight to Lesbian women was inadvertently included. It is the policy of the *Bulletin* not to publish sexist, homophobic, or racist views.

News of the Institute

The Documentation Centre

The Reading Room of the Institute is very dependent upon the co-operation of student members. Students work as assistants to the Documentalist to ensure that our resources are available in the evenings. Those who borrow books do so on an honour system, which works fairly well—no one is perfect! Some students are generous with donations of books they no longer need, or just happened to see on sale and thought would be useful.

One contribution that has been very useful was the compilation of a bibliography by the 1987 students in the Women and Music Course. Joanne Beggs, Jeanne Corrigal and Janet Wiegand scanned periodicals in the Reading Room collection and produced *Women and Music: A Selected Annotated Bibliography*. This work has been used by an author, a professor putting together a course on women and music, and by many other students.

I am always happy to have donations of student papers that are well researched and have a substantial bibliography. We do not have many student papers in our files. Perhaps students are too modest, but professors can help assess the merits of a contribution. Please keep coming—bearing gifts or not!

Joan M. Kohner, Documentalist

Dr. Joan Sherwood, whose research on the history of medicine in eighteenth century Spain is funded by the Hannah Institute, has joined the Institute as an Adjunct Fellow. Her book, *Poverty in Eighteenth Century Spain: The Women and Children of the Inclusa,* was launched here March 8th.

Dr. Barbara Roberts, Visiting Professor, recently accepted a position as Associate Professor of Women's Studies at Athabasca University.

Dr. Heather Jon Maroney has become an Adjunct Fellow with a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council post-doctoral fellowship to write a monograph on trade union and other feminisms in Quebec. She has also been

awarded a CRIAW/ICREF grant for a pilot project on "Feminism in Quebec allophone organisations."

Homa Hoodfar (Ph.D. Anthropology, Kent), who is working on domestic politics and economy in Cairo households, is visiting as an Adjunct Fellow.

Dr. Marianne Ainley has been awarded a three year Strategic Grant to continue her work on the careers of Canadian women scientists.

On sabbatical: Professors Arpi Hamalian, Maïr Verthuy, Sherry Simon.

Lesbian Studies

The Lesbian Studies Coalition is sponsoring a weekly meeting and discussion group, open to all lesbians and women, students, faculty and staff. Further information: 848-7431.

Trent Women's Studies Programme

A group from the newly established Women's Studies Program at Trent University paid a visit to the Simone de Beauvoir Institute in February, 1989. One of their visiting members, Xiaoping Li, from the People's Republic of China, spoke on "The Position of Women and Women's Studies in China Today." For information on Trent's cross-disciplinary B.A. programme, write to Women's Studies, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, K9J 7B8.

The Publications of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute/Les Publications de l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir: Vient de paraître/À paraître:

Linda Cormier et Lynn Lapostolle, *Les précieuses: un phénomène féministe à l'ère de Louis XIV*, 1988.

Immigrant Women/Les femmes immigrantes, Proceedings of The Institute Seminar/Actes du Séminaire de l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir. 1987-88.

Mothering, Motherhood/Maternité, maternage, Proceedings of The Institute Seminar/Actes du Séminaire de l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir. 1988-89.

OBITUARY

Brenda M. Carter, a recent contributor to the intellectual life of the Institute, died in England on April 12 at the age of 51.

Brenda had long been passionately interested in improving girls' science education. She published widely on mathematics for children, micro-computers in primary education, and women and mathematics. Brenda was hoping to become an Adjunct Fellow of the Institute.

A Brenda Carter fund will soon be established to raise money for a prize or award to encourage girls in mathematics. For further information, contact Marianne G. Ainley: 481-9927.